

HOMESCHOOL

Winter 2024

Indiana



**2024
Conference**
Info Inside!



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Welcome

Did you know?

January is one of the busiest times of the year for #teamIAHE.

The Indiana Legislature is back in session, and our Government Affairs Team is actively monitoring bills that can impact your freedom to homeschool. Our event team is working hard to ensure that **Homeschool Day at the Capitol** (page 31) is a success. The conference team is busy with the hundreds of details that make the **Parenting and Homeschool Conference** (page 13) the best one ever, including our first **College and Career Fair** (page 17) this year. And multiple team members are busy answering questions from parents who have made the transition to home education after the holidays.

In the midst of our 40th Anniversary year, it's easy to say that the IAHE has never been stronger.

#homeschoolstrong
#homeschoolindiana



Tara Bentley
Executive Director, IAHE

Issue 27, Volume 2

MAGAZINE TEAM

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Homeschool Indiana Core Values

To be Christ-focused
To be Indiana-focused
To be encouraging
To be a resource

BOARD MEMBERS

Steve & Penny Taylor
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The Indiana Association of Home Educators (IAHE) is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1983 for the purpose of serving the Lord Jesus Christ by supporting and encouraging families interested in home education. We define home education as parent-directed, home-based, privately-funded education.

Contact us! IAHE PO Box 217 Stilesville, IN 46180 | 317-467-6244 | iahe@iahe.net

The Power of Gathering Together

— *The Heart and Soul of Our Homeschool Conference* —

— Zan Tyler



I have a son who never wanted to go to bed when he was little. As I was contemplating this quandary one evening, I heard James Dobson on the radio relaying the story of a little boy who kept calling for his daddy at bedtime because he was afraid. The exasperated father finally and emphatically told the son, “You need to trust God when you are lonely or scared.”

“But, Daddy,” the little boy whimpered, “sometimes I just need someone with skin on.”

After the pandemic shut-downs and the transition to a lot of online learning opportunities, we are all like that little boy. We need someone with skin on. We need fellowship. We need to laugh together (which is hard to do alone). We need to cry together. We simply need to be together.

We find strength in gathering. We receive comfort from each other. We experience encouragement. We encounter new ideas and challenges. And as Christian parents, we are called to serve our families and each other. We need to seriously “consider how to stir one another to love and good works” (Hebrews 11:24, ESV).

There is no better way to do this than to attend the 2024 IAHE Parenting and Homeschool Conference—and to encourage others to come as well. It is time to gather together to give and to receive encouragement intentionally and in person, face-to-face.

Gathering takes effort. You have to get dressed, leave home, and travel, whether you live nearby or on the other side of the state. Ginny Yurich, a keynote speaker at last year's IAHE conference, said it well: "It is easier to stay put than to go out." But I know from Ginny's life and my own experiences that getting out and getting together with others is well worth the effort.

Jesus was a people magnet. People were drawn to Him. They gathered around Him everywhere He went: the disciples, whole cities, the multitudes, his enemies, immense crowds, hungry people, thirsty people, sick people, needy people, skeptical people, poor people, rich people, old people, children. The oppressed, the self-righteous, the broken-hearted, the disenfranchised. These people, these crowds, gathered around Jesus quickly, constantly, relentlessly, and sometimes violently.

Jesus knew the value of being with people. He left His exalted place in heaven to be with us. What a sacrifice He made to come to earth, live among us, and lay down His life for us. Even His name Immanuel means "God with us." The 2024 IAHE Parenting and Homeschool Conference provides a unique opportunity for us to be with others as well. There is nothing quite as powerful as being together in person with others on the same journey.

Here are some things you can do to prepare for this year's parenting and homeschool conference.

1. Rejoice in the opportunity to gather together

and invite others to come. Share this amazing opportunity with homeschooling friends and those interested in learning more about homeschooling. Homeschooling is growing by leaps and bounds, and new families need to know the resources and the help that awaits them at the IAHE Parenting and Homeschool Conference.

2. Look for opportunities to talk with other parents

during the conference,—while waiting for a workshop to begin, standing in line at an exhibitor booth, walking in the hallways, or enjoying the lunch break. You may be delightfully surprised when a fellow attendee encourages you by sharing a little about their experience. And through casual conversation, you may find you can bolster another parent in their dedication to homeschooling with a simple word that brings hope and inspiration.

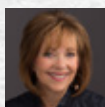
Recently while traveling home from a homeschool gathering, Joe and I made an unplanned stop to grab a bite to eat. We were talking about the event while waiting for our food, when quite unexpectedly a woman sitting at a table nearby looked at us and said, "I want my son to homeschool his children." We spent the next 30 minutes sharing information with this woman. It was a powerful, God-ordained moment. Had we been in Indiana, we would have immediately pointed her to the conference. Parents today are looking for good news in education. I believe they find it in homeschooling.



3. Look around and appreciate the dynamic community of families teaching their children at home. What a powerful reminder that you are not alone!

Joe and I can't wait to see you in Indianapolis on March 22 and 23! I am very excited about my keynote session, "A Purpose-Driven Education." Joe and I will be doing workshops where we discuss motivating your children, teaching writing like a pro, and the lurking dangers of social media. We will also do an engaging session with Roger and Jan Smith on the importance of keeping your marriage strong.

We can't wait to see you and visit with you in just a few months!



Zan Tyler's passion as a popular author and speaker is to encourage parents to raise children who love the Lord, understand their callings in life, and become active citizens who understand the principles of freedom that undergird our American heritage.



Can Science Be **“WORLDVIEW-NEUTRAL”?**

— Georgia Purdom, PhD

I once reviewed a homeschool science curriculum that claimed to be “worldview-friendly.” What they meant by worldview-friendly is that those who believe in evolution, creation, or intelligent design can use the curriculum. The publisher claimed that for science to be “real science” it can’t commit to a particular worldview and scientists must follow the evidence where it leads. I remember thinking something very similar many years ago when I first started researching the origins issue. The evidence would lead me to the truth, I just needed to follow.

But what I discovered was that evidence (e.g., fossils, rocks, DNA) doesn’t talk! And while science may be objective, scientists are not—especially in historical science. This type of science is based on events that have happened in the past and is not observable, testable, or repeatable (e.g. creation and evolution). The presuppositions or worldview of the scientists play a major role in determining how they interpret the evidence from the past. If the presuppositions are based on the truth, that will lead to the truth about the past, and vice versa if the presuppositions are false. There is only one truth source for the past as it concerns the beginnings of the universe, earth, and life—and that is the eyewitness account of God given to us in the Bible. Everything else is merely man’s opinions, imaginations, and ideas.

As I looked through the curriculum, what I noticed was a mixing of observational science and historical science. (Observational science is science in the present that can be evaluated using the scientific method and is observable, testable, and repeatable). For example, one of the questions posed to students is, “Did God create humans?” It is followed by these questions, “Who discovered it? When was it discovered? What is the evidence?” These questions are not applicable because we can’t answer the question “Did God create humans?” using observational science. It was an event that happened in the past and cannot be repeated, regardless of whether you believe God created humans or that humans evolved from an ape-like ancestor.

If the curriculum had stated, “What is DNA?” then we could answer those questions very easily because DNA exists in the present and we can study it in the lab. Both creationists and evolutionists would approach observational science—such as the laws of physics, the periodic table in chemistry, and the laws governing genetic inheritance—very similarly. However, when it comes to how the laws of physics and genetics and the elements in the periodic table came into existence, the presuppositions of the scientists will govern their interpretations.

To further convince us that the curriculum is “neutral,” the curriculum author stated, “In my opinion anytime we present information as “undisputed fact,” we have crossed over into “dogma.” This includes both scientific “facts” and religious “facts.”” What does the author mean by religious “facts”? Would this include the virgin birth and Resurrection of Jesus Christ? Are they not to be considered undisputed fact and therefore not dogma? If these events in the New Testament did not happen, they would chime the death knell for Christianity (1 Corinthians 15:14). Not affirming the Bible’s authority in Genesis, and the miracles of creation recorded there, is a slippery slope to questioning its authority everywhere else.

There is no such thing as being “worldview neutral” because that is a worldview! Jesus dispelled the myth of neutrality when He stated, “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.” (Matthew 12:30).

Truth matters, but how do we arrive at the truth as it concerns the area of historical science? We must begin with the Bible, the history book of the universe, and the eyewitness account of God Himself in Genesis. Everything else is just man’s fallible, errant opinion about the past. As we study observational science, we see it confirms God’s Word and the biological, geological, and astronomical principles presented in the Bible are true.

Homeschool moms and dads, be sure to choose curriculum that has the Bible as its foundation and glorifies Jesus as the Creator. Be sure to check out the many Bible affirming resources we produce at Answers in Genesis. ■



Dr. Georgia Purdom holds a PhD in molecular genetics. After teaching college for 6 years, she joined Answers in Genesis where she now serves as the Vice President of Educational Content. Dr. Purdom and her husband Chris have been married for 27 years and have one daughter, Elizabeth.



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The Beauty of Nature Study in a Charlotte Mason Education

— Amber O'Neal Johnston

Charlotte Mason was an educator in England

at the turn of the twentieth century, and while others thought that children were no more than empty vessels to be filled with information, she believed that they were born full people capable of independent, intelligent thought and that they required vibrant ideas, rather than dry facts, to feed their budding minds. Nestled among the pages of her six-volume book series is a philosophy of education followed by a growing number of homeschoolers around the world, including my family.

Many people associate a Charlotte Mason (CM) education with history rotations and living books, but those things alone do not comprise a complete CM experience. There are many facets of the feast, and one in particular—nature study—was an aspect of her teachings that intrigued and terrified me in equal measure. In her first volume, Mason states, “We were all meant to be naturalists, each in his degree, and it is inexcusable to live in a world so full of the marvels of plant and animal life and to care for none of these things.” While this concept resonated deeply with me, I had to sit back and chuckle because I was raised in the air conditioning and had no clue where to begin.

Around the same time I was introduced to Charlotte Mason, a friend recommended that I read *Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv in which the author discusses the staggering divide between children and the outdoors. He directly links the lack of nature in the lives of today’s wired generation, what he calls a nature-deficit, to some of the most disturbing childhood trends, such as the rises in obesity, attention disorders, and depression. His book builds a compelling case for the idea that direct exposure to nature is essential for healthy childhood development.

Upon finishing Louv’s book, I went back to Mason’s volumes and happened upon this quote: “He must live hours daily in the open air, and, as far as possible, in the country; must look and touch and listen; must be quick to note, consciously, every peculiarity of habit or structure, in beast, bird, or insect; the manner of growth and fructification of every plant. He must be accustomed to ask why—Why does the wind blow? Why does the river flow? Why is a leaf-bud sticky? And do not hurry to answer his questions for him; let him think his difficulties out so far as his small experience will carry him.”

Since encountering these thoughts, I’ve learned that the biggest obstacle to embracing time in nature is the mindset of the mother. Armed with Mason’s charge and Louv’s research, I became determined to make time in nature a major part of my homelife and, therefore, my homeschool.

This commitment ran so deep that we moved homes to live on a property that allows my children to confront nature—wooded landscapes, lakes, a creek, and wildlife—steps from the back door.

But figuring out what to do once we got there proved to be more challenging. Slowly, I learned that our studies of plants, animals,



waterways, fields, and forests would be grounded in observations along with collections, journaling, and careful attention. And though I, the teacher, knew next to nothing about the natural world, I clung to Louv’s words: “It’s a good thing to learn more about nature in order to share this knowledge with children; it’s even better if the adult and child learn about nature together. And it’s a lot more fun.”

So, each day that we can, my family gets out in nature to have fun—sometimes to study something specific, occasionally to discover a new treasure, and often with no expectations whatsoever. My children do not know any other way of living, but I have discovered a secret that I wish the little girl in me had known: The woods make me come alive!

Whether you’re new to homeschooling or simply open to exploring a new way of pursuing learning, I invite you to get to know Charlotte Mason. Discover on your own how her philosophy of education can be used to infuse the beauty, truth, and goodness found in the natural world into your home education journey. ■



Amber O’Neal Johnston lives in Georgia, nestled among pine trees, hammocks, and ziplines with her husband and their four children. Her happy place is the back porch on a rainy day, preferably with a giant mug of hot tea and a good book. She’s the author of *A PLACE TO BELONG: Raising Kids to Celebrate Their Heritage, Community, and the World*, and she offers literature-based homeschool lesson guides focused on Black history and culture at HeritageMom.com and on Instagram @heritagemomblog.



- Build Your Faith - *Through Geology*

— Patrick Nurre

We know that as a
homeschooling parent

you likely have lots of plates that you are spinning, and teaching geology is not always the first thing on the list of what to teach. There's English, math, and history. And in a world that is rapidly changing, we know that it is important to you that your children have a vibrant, Biblical faith when they leave home. But how do you fit it in?

Our solution is that you teach geology. Yes, teach geology! Geology is the foundational science, the one that kicks the Bible off. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." You know, that passage. The very first one! And not only that, but geology is the underlying story behind the Flood of Genesis.

So when we encourage teaching geology, we are talking about teaching foundational truths of the Bible, ones that will impact how you look at Scripture, and whether you are able to trust it in all that it says. So you build faith through geology.

Build Your Faith Beginning with Genesis

We start with Genesis because it is the most attacked book of the Bible. Its timeline of events in history has been ridiculed so that believers feel that they must apologize for the book, or reinterpret it. But if we are to have a strong faith, we must be able to trust Genesis and all it says. Why is that?

The book of Genesis is the history of man from the very beginning. It is a reliable, historical record of the creation of our world and the introduction of sin into that world. And what follows in Genesis leads ultimately to a catastrophic flood that changes forever what our world looked like “in the beginning.” It is a history that has chronologies and genealogies.

Both the chronologies and genealogies are very specific as to when certain persons were born, and at what age they had their children. When you use these, it yields an earth that is about 6000 years old and a flood that took place about 4500 years ago.

Tracing the Messiah

But probably the most important fact about this chronology is that the Bible is very clear that the Messiah, the Chosen One who would be our savior, is traced through this lineage. Not only is it prophesied that this would be the case, but it is demonstrated in the New Testament in the genealogies of Matthew and Luke. If these genealogies are not to be trusted, then we have no savior. The Bible is not true, and we only have this world to live for, with its hopelessness and sin.

Science and the Age of the Earth

You might be thinking that this is just wishful thinking, that science has proven the Bible to be unreliable as to dating the age of the earth, and that our earth is 4.6 billion years old. And if that is so, then our Bible can't be trusted when it speaks about the origin of the earth. But that is just not true. For instance, secular dating and age of the universe and our earth is based in large part on an acceptance of all the processes involved in radiometric dating, as reliable and accurate. And that simply is not the case. (But that is a study for another time!)

The age of the universe and the earth is more properly a question of philosophy—what you believe. It is not a matter of science since you cannot conduct tests to verify such an assumption.

If we can trust what the Bible has to say about the Flood, then we suddenly have a very simple explanation for what we see all around us, from the hills and mountains to the vast oceans and canyons. It all makes sense and falls perfectly into place. We can now study geology with a different filter—one that acknowledges that the earth is actually not that old.

A trusted history is the only sure way to discover the age of the earth. For us, that history is the Bible.

This doesn't change the science—that is, what is truly science and not speculation. Rocks and minerals have very specific properties. We can discover those. And we can study weather patterns and petroleum engineering. We can discover magnificent fossils in the field and reconstruct dinosaurs. We can observe and make calculations concerning volcanoes.

Build Your Faith Through Geology

So when we teach geology, first and foremost, we settle that the Bible is history and can be trusted. And then we bring our science discoveries to that table and begin our study. Standing on the validity of Genesis is all-important. This is what is going to build faith. ■



Patrick Nurre's passion for geology began as a youngster, rockhounding near the Big Horn River in Montana. Today he is a popular speaker and teacher on geology and worldview. Patrick is the vision behind *Northwest Treasures*, creating geology resources for PreK-12. He has authored nineteen books on geological subjects, PreK-12. You can find interesting videos on his Youtube channel: youtube.com/@patricknurre6614

IAHE Internships

The IAHE offers student internships for high school juniors and seniors - a great way to earn high school credits!

"My internship with IAHE has been amazing! I've been able to develop skills like writing, graphic design, and researching. I also had the privilege of taking a Strengthsfinder Assessment, which taught me quite a bit about the areas in which God gifted me. Working with this team has been a pleasure, and the experiences I had and the skills I learned will definitely play a role in my life after high school. I highly recommend this program!"

— Jillian Hicks

iahe.net/internship

Applications open March 2024.





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Indiana Association of Home Educators'

Parenting and Homeschool Conference

March 22 & 23, 2024

Wyndham Indianapolis West
2544 Executive Dr.
Indianapolis, IN 46214



It's a date! This Conference is a special opportunity for parents to get away and be refreshed, encouraged, and equipped. We hope you will embrace this opportunity and take home fresh ideas, vision, and purpose to your homeschool. Due to our venue's limited capacity, **this event is for parents**. Get ready to be empowered and challenged. We can't wait to connect with you there!

REGISTRATION

Important note:

All conference tickets are sold via pre-registration - there will be no at-the-door tickets available this year due to limited capacity.

Regular Price ending March 1st

Individual: \$55 | Couple: \$65

Premium and Supporting Members save an extra 10%!

Late Registration March 2nd-15th (if space available)

Individual: \$62 | Couple: \$72

Infants of nursing mothers are welcome and will not require an additional ticket.

iahe.net/2024-conference

Are you ready to take your homeschooling to the next level? Burnout and frustration should not be your daily companions. You are meant to thrive as a parent and as a teacher, but you can't do it alone. You need community!

The 2024 IAHE Parenting and Homeschool Conference will fill you up with extraordinary new ideas, renew your passion for home education, and give you the guidance you need to continue your homeschool journey with excellence. Rediscover the **POWER** of community as you engage with speakers, exhibitors, and fellow homeschool parents—we are all on this exciting journey together. Let's lock arms!

Conference Schedule

Friday & Saturday

Doors Open

8:00am

Keynote Session

8:30am

Exhibit Hall Opens

10:00am

Workshop #1

10:30-11:30am

Workshop #2

12:00-1:00pm

Workshop #3

1:30-2:30pm

Workshop #4

3:00-4:00pm

Workshop #5

4:30-5:30pm

Doors Close

6:00pm

Heidi St. John

MomStrong International & Firmly Planted Family



Heidi is the author of several books, including her latest, *MomStrong 365: A One Year Devotional to Encourage and Empower Everyday Moms*. Her podcast, "Off the Bench with Heidi St. John" has been downloaded over 20 million times and is available wherever podcasts can be found.

You can read her article on page 20.

Zan Tyler

BJU Press Homeschool/HomeWorks by Precept



Zan's passion as a popular author and speaker is to encourage parents to raise children who love the Lord, understand their callings in life, and become active citizens who understand the principles of freedom that undergird our American heritage.

You can read her article on page 4.

Teen Leadership Lab

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Leadership skills apply in all areas of life.

Teens, ages 13 to 18, will learn how to lead from any position.

This program runs concurrently with the IAHE Parenting & Homeschooling Conference.

March 22 & March 23

Price: \$50

Registration is limited to 75 students.

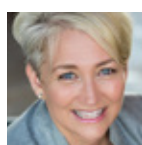


**Thank you to our
2024 sponsors!**

Meet our 2024 Speakers!



Rachel Anderson and her husband Steve homeschool their four children. When she started homeschooling, she realized that two of her children have learning struggles, one with moderate/severe dyslexia, ADHD, and memory deficiency. As a result, she has done considerable research and loves to pass on her knowledge and experience to other parents.



Shellie Doub is the mother of five homeschool graduates and the Assistant Director of Dual Enrollment for Cedarville University. Shellie is an Ohio College Credit Plus (CCP) specialist and serves as Cedarville's liaison to homeschool organizations including HSLDA, Classical Conversations, and Christian Home Educators of Ohio (CHEO).



Aimee Eucce is a second-generation homeschooler who relaunched Play 'n Talk, a 60+-year-old Phonics Company. At 5, Aimee was told she would never read past a 6th-grade level due to severe dyslexia. However, after finishing the Play 'n Talk Phonics and Spelling program she was reading at a college level and spelling at a 6th-grade level.



Amber O'Neal Johnston is the author of *A PLACE TO BELONG: Raising Kids to Celebrate Their Heritage, Community, and the World*, and she offers literature-based homeschool lesson guides focused on Black history and culture.

You can read her article on page 6.

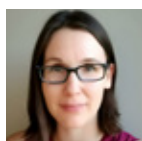


Courtney Nalin is a faith-filled, homeschool mom of two as well as licensed paramedic and the host of the Imperfectly Pollyanna podcast, where she focuses on finding the good in life's imperfections. It is her desire to encourage and empower families that are "raising warriors" with God's grace and direction.



Patrick Nurre is a popular speaker and teacher on geology and worldview. Patrick is the vision behind Northwest Treasures, creating geology resources for PreK-12. He has authored 19 books on geological subjects, PreK-12.

You can read his article on page 10.

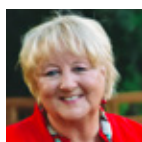


Amanda Owens, MA, CCC-SLP is a homeschool grad, mom of four, and speech language pathologist. Through her private practice Illuminate Communicate, she equips parents across Indiana to do speech therapy at home so their children can talk clearly and confidently.



Georgia Purdom holds a PhD in molecular genetics. After teaching college for six years, she joined Answers in Genesis where she now serves as the Vice President of Educational Content.

You can read her article on page 6.



Jan Smith, a Louisiana mother of four who were homeschooled until their college years, manages their small horse farm and other family businesses. She mentors young mothers in her community through a weekly Bible study and monthly parties in her home. Life after homeschooling is filled with playing piano, teaching young moms, reading to the grandchildren, riding horses, and growing flowers and vegetables.

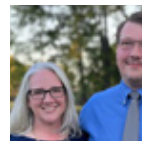


Roger Smith, author of *Parenting with Influence*, is a primary care physician in rural Louisiana. His vlog, *Parenting Matters Now*, can be found on Facebook and RogerSmithMD.com. The Smiths speak/mentor on parenting, marriage, education, and leadership.

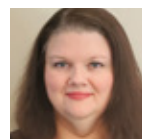
You can read his article on page 22.



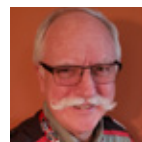
Joe Tyler and his wife Zan have been actively involved in the national and international homeschool movement for the past 35 years, teaching and mentoring others. They will take you beyond the demands of everyday life to embrace a life-giving vision of family life.



Bryan & Kylene Varner have homeschooled their three children since 2013. Bryan works as a software engineer and Superintendent to the family's homeschool, while also serving as the Lead Bill Reader for IAHE Action. Kylene homeschools their children and serves as IAHE's Social Media Lead. She also sits on IAHE Action's Board of Directors serving as a policy analyst and legislative liaison, working as an Orton-Gillingham tutor on the side.



Andrea Walters and her husband Patrick have been homeschooling in southern Indiana since 2008. They've graduated their two daughters and have a little longer with their 17 year old son. Andrea's mission is to leverage her experiences in business, technology, and home education to serve the homeschooling community.



Woody Youngs wears several hats in Trail Life (Chairman of the National Advisory Council, Area Point Man, Troopmaster), has served as camp director for six National Summer Adventures and numerous regional and area events, and is actively involved with training leaders for the ministry of Trail Life USA.

You can read the Trail Life article on page 18.

For an up-to-date list of our 2024 conference speakers, visit iahe.net/2024-conference

Exhibitor Listing

American Sign Language Center

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DNR Division of Fish & Wildlife

Emmaus Worldwide--Bible Curriculum

Environmental Education Association

of Indiana

Eternity at Stake--Rex Smith

Geology by Northwest Treasures

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Crafting Memories

An Analog Challenge in a Digital Age

— Mark Hancock



As the holiday season envelops us in its warmth and cheer,

there's a palpable shift in the air. Families come together, each member finding solace in the comforting embrace of tradition. What stands out during this time of the year is the intentional deceleration of our fast-paced lives. In the midst of fresh baked cookies, twinkling lights, and festive decorations, a subtle magic happens—families slow down.

The holiday season serves as a poignant reminder of the value of face-to-face connections, a reprieve from the ever-present screens that dominate our daily lives. As smartphones, tablets, and laptops take a backseat, families find themselves gathered around the dinner table, engaged in the art of conversation. The clattering of dishes and the laughter that fills the room become the soundtrack of genuine connection.

Board games make a triumphant return, reclaiming their place in the heart of family gatherings. Monopoly, Scrabble, or a simple deck of cards become catalysts for shared moments of joy and friendly competition. The digital realm, which so often isolates individuals in its vast expanse, fades away as families huddle together in the analog warmth of shared experiences.

In the glow of holiday lights, stories come alive. Whether exchanged around the crackling warmth of a fireplace or the flickering flames of a campfire, tales of yesteryears and cherished memories weave a tapestry of connection. Grandparents share the wisdom of their days, parents recount adventures of their youth, and children contribute the magic of their imaginations. The resonance of these stories transcends generations, creating a timeless bond that technology struggles to emulate.

Yet, as the new year dawns, there lies a challenge for families—to carry forward the spirit of intentional connection into the days that follow. The allure of screens, the hypnotic glow of televisions, and the immersive worlds of video games beckon, threatening to undo the magic of face-to-face family interaction. The challenge is to be deliberate in carving out time, to put down the screens, and to pause the digital noise that often drowns out the richness of human connection.

In the rush of modern life, this challenge requires conscious effort. It means setting aside dedicated moments each day or week to reconnect without the intrusion of technology. It means resisting the urge to check emails, social media, or the latest trending topics, opting instead for the quiet beauty of genuine conversation. It means creating space for the simple pleasures of board games, storytelling, campfires, and shared meals.

In a world dominated by the digital, the power of genuine, face-to-face interaction is unparalleled. Let the holiday season be not just a temporary respite but a blueprint for the intentional and ongoing cultivation of family bonds. In doing so, we ensure that the warmth and magic of the holidays extend far beyond the calendar, becoming a perennial celebration of the most precious gift of all—time spent together. ■



Mark Hancock holds Masters Degrees in Counseling and has taught at secular and Christian colleges. A broadcast guest on James Dobson's *Family Talk*, *Focus on the Family* and others, he was named among AFA's '40 Faithful.' Author of several books, he serves as CEO of Trail Life USA. He and his wife of 35 years have two homeschooled sons.

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3 Frequently Asked Questions *About Notebooking*

— Heidi St. John



When I started homeschooling in 1998,

I did the only thing I knew how to do: I set up a “real” classroom in our and ordered a million dollars worth of workbooks. (*At least it felt that way.*) And we did okay ... for a while.

We were about six months into it when I began to notice that the “life” I had longed for was just not happening with the workbooks. For the kids, it was just “business as usual,” as we went about our school day; there was no chance for creativity outside of the prescribed worksheet. They seemed bored and disinterested. Another thing that frustrated me was that each one of my children was studying something different; the first grader and third and fifth-grader were all doing a different era of history. Different sciences. Even different Bible lessons.

I was frustrated. I was hoping for more “togetherness” in our studies and less fragmented days. I didn’t miss the craziness of taking my daughter to school every day. I was hoping for more of a “one-room schoolhouse” approach in our homeschool, and having so many different workbooks and textbooks was not answering my heart’s cry to simplify our learning together. So, I began to search.

It was 2005 when I discovered something called lapbooking. Shortly after that, I learned about notebooking. These two things literally *changed the way we homeschool*.

If you’re looking for a way to simplify your homeschool, keep reading. Notebooking might be just the answer you need.

1

What is Notebooking?

This is by far the most frequently asked question I get when it comes to notebooking, so I’ll make this as simple as possible.

Notebooking is simply teaching your child to write about and illustrate what they are learning in school. Notebook pages are stored using a 3-ring binder and sheet protectors. You can use pre-made notebooking pages or, you can use my favorite method—which is to let the child design it. Original is always better than not, right?

Over the years, we have done a mixture of these kinds of notebooking. I also keep a few pages here and there of traditional “workbook” pages in their notebooks. It serves as a reminder and *proof* that we’ve actually accomplished something that year. Occasionally I will open the notebooks to remind myself.



Allowing the kids to create their own layouts started rough but ended beautifully.

A few other FAQ's about this:

What do you use? I use 2" or 3" binders. They can be found on sale all the time over at Amazon, and of course, you can find them at your local Walmart.

When do you notebook? We do it one day a week. I keep a running list of the things we are studying on a whiteboard in our kitchen. We take one day each week to create notebook pages. It's not something we do every day. (Do you feel relieved yet?)

2

How Do I Start Notebooking?

Every family who notebooks does it a little differently. At our house, we notebook just one day each week. Usually, we do it at the end of the school week. I'll try to break it down for you a little by putting it into steps.

Keep a running list of the things you're studying. We write them on a whiteboard. For example, last year during a week in October, we studied:

The parts of a flower
Joseph is sold into slavery (*Firmly Planted, Book 2*)
Times Tables the Fun Way
The Civil War

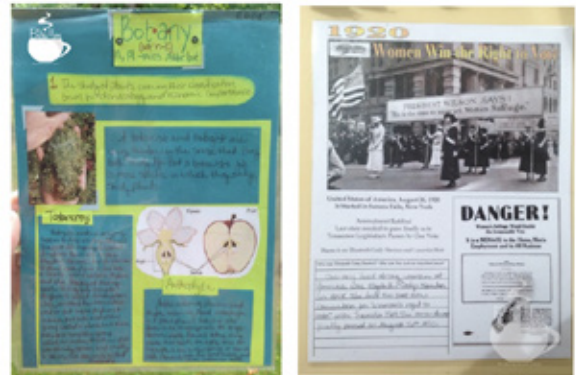
I let my children choose things off the list to write about based on their age. For example, the 3rd grader chooses two things that really made her eyes light up. She will make two notebook pages about those two things. The older they are, the more pages they can create. Four is about the limit for "original" pages, so if you have a high schooler, you might ask them to create a page about each of the four things I listed above.

We make a mess. Messes are good when they're signs of a creative, engaged child! Get out the cardstock, glue, scissors, sheet protectors, colored pencils and crayons. Let your children be creative.

Create a page! Sometimes, I use notebooking templates that I find on the internet, or I create my own on our home computer. My favorite way by far to create pages is to simply let the children make their own. You'll need to show them examples, and if they are young, you'll need to help them draw lines, etc., but after that, let them spread their creative wings and fly!

Put finished notebook pages in sheet protectors and put them in your binders. Don't forget to put a DATE on each page! I like to keep our binders in chronological order. It really helps with reference points at the end of the year.

Add other pages you are doing in school; the occasional math page or language lesson. All of these will serve to help you create a wonderful portfolio of your child's work. They'll love looking back over it.



Use what you have around the house to create pages. The one on the right is computer made.

3

Favorite Resources For Notebooking?

These are a few of my favorite things:

Lapbooking Made Simple – my new eBook about Lapbooking. (great to use in tandem with notebooking)

Five in a Row's Notebook Builder (Notebooking Templates)

Sheet protectors
Glue sticks
Decorative Scissors
Avery binders (3" and 2")
Colored Pencils
Fine-tipped Sharpie markers
Stickers (used to decorate pages)
Pens & Pencils (duh, but I had to throw it in here.)

Bottom line: Notebooking can help you be more creative with your children, learn more, and enjoy it more. Give it a try!



Page from a study on botany (L) and cover for our second daughter's 9th-grade notebook.

You've got this!.



Heidi St. John is the author of several books, including *Becoming MomStrong: How to Fight with All That's in You for Your Family and Your Faith* and its corresponding *Becoming MomStrong Bible Study*, as well her latest, *MomStrong 365: A One Year Devotional to Encourage and Empower Everyday Moms*. Her podcast, "Off the Bench with Heidi St. John" has been downloaded over 20 million times and is available wherever podcasts can be found.

Aiming at Character Development

— Roger Smith, MD



"He who aims at nothing hits it every time!"

is one of our family's favorite sayings. The truth is applicable to all of life, but it is particularly true in parenting. The target is so important. Now I'm not speaking in terms of the recently divorced woman when she spoke of her ex-husband saying, "I missed my husband today, but my aim is getting better." When I speak of the aim we have for our children, be certain that they are not the target, but rather, it is their future and, more importantly, their character.

I love asking parents questions about what they want their children to be like when they are fully grown. When I require them to use as few words as possible to describe their goals for their child, a parent has never named a career, a degree, an income, or an accomplishment. Parents universally think of character traits, even as simple as a "hard worker." The reality is that most parents do not stop long enough to really define what the values are that are most important to them. It is easy to say "good character" or "a good person," but those descriptions are too general to aim at without being more specific.

The more specific the goal for each child, the better, but universally noble character traits work as well, such as speaking the truth at all times, being cheerful, helping the weak, or being thrifty. Every character trait that ranks high would have skills, knowledge, or experiences that you would want to make available or encourage your child to pursue on his own. A mixture of three things help to move a child along the path of development : (1) books or stories about someone who was known for that character trait, (2) encounters with real people great or small who live it out, and (3) experiences that demand the development of the trait.

Our oldest two children loved horses. We saw an opportunity to use something they loved to develop the character traits of dependability, independence, and responsibility. Though we knew nothing about competitive riding, we knew it would involve a lot of responsibility and would foster independent thinking. It would also require consistency in many things.

The kids were 8 and 9 years old when we began this process of daily grooming, feeding, and riding. At first, we were all learning together, but they quickly became the experts of the family. Horse trainers were involved to facilitate their growth, but remember, we weren't aiming at horses. Competitive riding was just the tool we chose to use to develop character. As we saw the signs of character rising, we shifted more and more responsibility to the kids.

It was quite a feat getting ready to go to a horse show because a show was typically a 3-day affair. Through the years, thorough lists were created. By the time the kids were 11 and 12, they were in charge of all preparations. When departure time arrived, they had hitched up the trailer, backed into place, loaded everything on all those lists, and had the car ready for everyone else to hop in. Did I mention they were 12 and under?

A long list of skills and knowledge was necessary for their success. As I write this, I think, "There's no way they could have done all of that at their age." There was so much to think through and pack. But they did it!

Well, I must say it didn't happen overnight, and it didn't happen by accident, but it did happen, and that was just the beginning of many of their tales. But these tales are not about some amazing kids or proud parents; these tales are normal development of character that can be your kids. It does take planning and fun, work and smiles, learning and laughter.

When you are making progress in life, there is one thing true about it—it is uphill all the way. To make progress with our children, we often need ways to pace ourselves in our progress. Short-term check-in spots are helpful to show progress and measure the pace. We were always on the lookout for programs that had built-in goal setting along with skills and knowledge training. Boy scouts, 4H, music lessons, and speech and debate competition were among the things that helped us have that structure and system.

There are lots of organizations that have character training components and can easily fit into the plan. Many families use a variety of sports or cheerleading to pursue personal development. None of these things are completely automatic, though. It will take regular engagement with your child to groom his attitude toward growth and to commend him on the visible progress in character development. It is during the engagement process that the five



most powerful words in the English language must be used, "I am proud of you."

In the long game of character development, there is nothing that propels like praise. Take joy when you see your daughter give a confident, pleasant greeting to a local leader followed by a kind, caring look into the eyes of an onlooking child that admires her. It is the "attaboy" offered to a son who willingly helps a neighbor at personal inconvenience or sacrifice.

Wouldn't it be great if those things were true about your kids? It could be, depending on how good you are at aiming. I guess I should caution you that aiming high also has high costs and high risks. Somehow, we seem to know instinctively what is possible for our family. At times though, we Smiths had a problem with sticking to the "possible." Instead, we often chose to aim for the impossible, and that worked a lot better for us.

So, what are you aiming at? Take time to list some character traits that are of high value in your family. Make the list no longer than five, but maybe as few as three, so focused attention and effort can be given to making a plan for progress. To steal a line from a movie, "Aim small, miss small." ■



Roger Smith, MD, author of *Parenting with Influence*, is a primary care physician in rural Louisiana. His vlog, *Parenting Matters Now*, can be found on Facebook and RogerSmithMD.com. The Smiths speak/mentor on parenting, marriage, education, and leadership.



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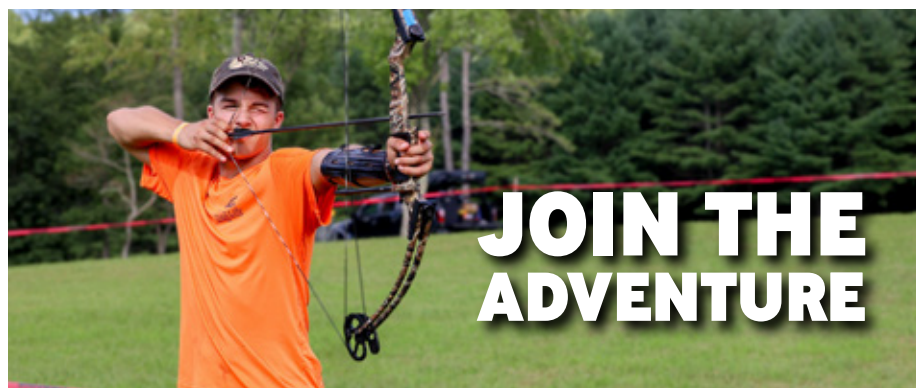
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JOIN THE ADVENTURE



Homesteading & Homeschooling

Two Peas in a Pod, Part 2 — Amy Sager

Part 1 of this article discussed the resurgence of homesteading in our society and the large number of homeschoolers that are embracing this lifestyle. In Part 2, we'll look at how you can incorporate homesteading practices into the education of your children.

Do you ever think about how compartmentalized and specialized our society has become?

I think back to when people learned a multitude of practical skills regardless of what their "day job" was. Together, families grew vegetables, raised chickens, canned food, made salves, foraged for berries, made soap, and so on. Early Americans were highly skilled, self-sufficient, and hard-working citizens. They had an arsenal of skills compared to what we have today, and for many decades, they passed those on to their children.

Homeschooling within a homesteading context can help us reclaim some of that lost knowledge and skill. We can take a whole-child approach to education that integrates academic learning with real-world skills. Subjects like biology, mathematics, and environmental science come to life as children witness the practical applications of these concepts in homesteading. Beyond the confines of a traditional classroom, homeschooling on a homestead nurtures creativity, problem-solving, excellent communication, and a strong work ethic. Here are some ideas you can put into practice.

Go Beyond the Workbooks

Going beyond the confines of workbooks in homeschooling can ignite a real passion for learning in your children. Try to embrace a hands-on approach whenever possible through field trips, interactive projects, or collaborative activities. You'll be amazed at what your children absorb. Here are some examples:

- Instead of filling out a worksheet about honey bees, visit an actual honey bee farm and ask for a tour. Maybe you could even start a beehive on your property. Hunter's Honey Farm in Martinsville, Indiana does a great job with their guided tours.
- Embrace projects! Supply your children with raw materials and time and watch what they create. They can build real-life skills that will serve your



home well (woodworking, sewing, engineering and problem solving, cooking, raising animals and all that involves, gardening, etc.)

- Learn on the fly by taking advantage of those great teaching moments. For example, while you are canning jam, research and talk about how pectin helps jam to set. When someone gets a cut, look up some herbs that have healing properties. Wellness Mama has some great information and recipes.

Turn Off the Screens

You don't have to look very hard to find research that shows the damage screen time is doing to our children. What concerns me more, though, are the minutes and hours of exciting, educational opportunities that are being hijacked by screens every day. Here are some ideas to reclaim that precious time in your children's lives:

- Instead of building a habit of video games each afternoon, help your children actively seek out meaningful activities each day. Bake a loaf of bread? Learn to build a fire? Make a bird feeder? Mix up a batch of lotion? The possibilities are endless.
- Pick a theme for each week. Maybe one week is different ways to cook an egg, and another week is how to whittle using a knife and chunk of wood (or bar of soap for younger children).
- Maybe a shift in your views on free time is necessary. Is the purpose of free time to be entertained? Or is the purpose to have time to pursue personal interests and grow in those areas? I suggest the latter. Guide your children to choose activities that they enjoy and can build skills in.

Make Your Children Work

Whether you live on 20 acres, a quarter of an acre, or in an apartment, your children need to learn to work. The young people of this generation have overwhelmingly forgotten this lost treasure called work and the power that it has to transform lives. A homesteading mindset can turn that right around as you and your children daily perform meaningful tasks together. I don't mean simple house chores. Those are great and certainly necessary, but let's think beyond that.

- Do you purchase all of your vegetables and herbs from a store? Try starting a garden (in pots, raised beds, or a backyard patch), and give your children the gift of learning that food doesn't just appear on shelves.
- Do you buy all kinds of vitamin C and immune boosting supplements? You could make a science project out of researching natural plants that are high in vitamin C and how to make a vitamin C tincture out of them. Put your children in charge of gathering the supplies, and teach them the goodness of making our own remedies.
- Who is maintaining your home and property? Your children can be learning (YouTube is a great resource) to fix the leaky sink, repair the broken door trim, put new boards on the fence, build the chicken coop, stain the deck...

We all want our children to be happy, but maybe we're going about it the wrong way. If we look at society today, we can clearly see that spoon feeding our children everything they need in life is not making them happy—it's causing discontent and entitlement. Maybe what they need is real work—work that takes larger chunks of time, not just five minutes—to build their

character and give them ownership of their life. Maybe they need to see the value of working to survive in order to appreciate the blessings in life.

When you start to view homesteading and homeschooling as lifestyles and not just as isolated activities you do each day, you become aware of all of the possibilities for learning and skill building in your everyday life. You begin to realize that there is no room for boredom; on the contrary, there are not nearly enough hours in each day to learn all you want to learn and accomplish all you want to accomplish with your family. I hope you are encouraged now to go beyond the workbooks, turn off the screens, and make your children work. I think you will love the fruit of this homesteading and homeschooling lifestyle. ■



Amy Sager is the IAHE Publications Director and Managing Editor of *Homeschool Indiana*. She and her husband Mike serve on the IAHE Board of Directors and help run a thriving local homeschool ministry. They have graduated one and continue homeschooling the other four, dedicating much of their time to their farm, cooking from scratch, photography, reading, art & engineering projects, and more.

Check out some
of these resources!

Hunter's Honey Farm

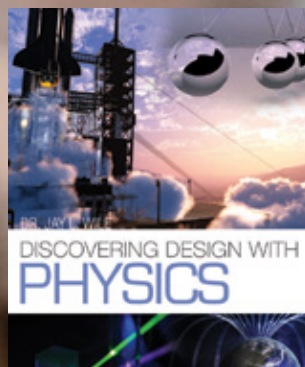


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A small red bird, possibly a cardinal or a similar species, is perched on a dark, snow-covered branch. The bird has a bright red body and a dark head. The background is a soft-focus view of many other branches covered in snow, creating a winter scene.

Our Feathered Friends

— Through the Winter —

— Joann Burnside Hoyt



When the weather starts to become cooler,

and leaves change color we often see flocks of birds gathering together to begin their journey south, to warmer temperatures. This process is called migration, and the birds that flock up and fly away include a variety of species and types of migratory birds. Many people recognize the V-shaped flocks of geese that are seen in the skies over Indiana, but more than just waterfowl migrate. Shorebirds, landbirds, seabirds, and raptors all have varieties that travel to find a warmer climate. An interesting thought is that some of the birds you see flying overhead actually started even farther north, well up into Canada, and we are simply on their flight path farther south.

You might wonder why birds migrate in the first place. It is not as much about the air temperature as it is about food. When cold weather hits the northern states, the insects and plants that are a primary part of many birds' diet either stop producing or die off. Therefore the birds have to travel to places where insects, seeds, and other food sources are still available and return home when it warms up, and there is plenty of food. It's pretty amazing that birds do not have to be taught to fly to another place for food; nor do they have to have a map to travel or a clock or calendar to know when to come back. It is all done by instinct: an innate knowledge put within each animal by design, so that it is able to survive and reproduce after its kind.

Have you ever considered those birds that stay nearby all year round? Just as migratory birds have been designed to know where to go and when to leave, birds that stick around are designed to survive and thrive in cold weather. That means that they have the ability to find food in winter and are able to withstand colder temps. And as a bonus to us, winter birds flitting from branch to branch in search of food are often the only signs of nature we see on long, cold winter days. Let's look at a few of my favorite winter birds.

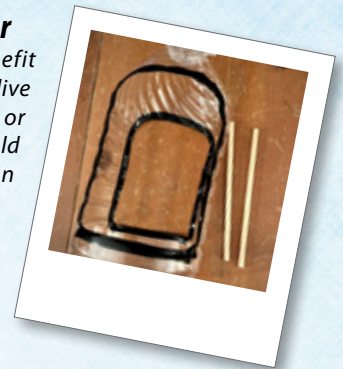
Northern Cardinal

A very adaptable bird, the Northern Cardinal lives in a variety of habitats, including forests, woodlands, gardens, and swamps. Although their diet consists



Water Bottle Bird Feeder

Feeders can be a big benefit to birds, especially if you live in a more populated area or if snow lingers, and the cold weather lasts longer than usual.



Supplies needed:

- One, 1 gallon size, empty plastic bottle (best with clear or blue plastic, not a milk jug.)
- Sharp knife or scissors
- Electricians or duct tape
- Two pieces of dowel rod or skewers a couple of inches wider than the bottle.
- Length of wire to hang the feeder
- Permanent marker

Step 1. Draw a large opening on two opposite sides of the water bottle. Using the knife or scissors cut out an arched shape from each side of the bottle, leaving at least 2 inches at the bottom to create a seed tray and enough around the sides and top to keep its shape.

Step 2. Use the tape to cover all the cut edges to protect the bird's feathers from sharp edges.

Step 3. Using a hole punch, hot punch, or knife to create a hole in each side of the bottle, spaced evenly, just above the seed tray. Slide each dowel rod through the holes, leaving a little stick out on each side. This creates perches within the feeder. If necessary, seal the hole with hot glue or a small dab of silicone.

Step 4. Attach the wire to the top if desired to hang the feeder. How you do this and how long it needs to be will depend on where you want to place your feeder.

*Did you notice the bird on the opposite page?
See if you can figure out what kind of bird it is.
Hint: It's actually native to Europe,
not Indiana.*



“Save the Birds” Window Decals

You might be wondering how making window decals can help “save the birds,” but if you have ever heard the THUD of a bird slamming into a window, you probably have a good idea. Clear, clean windows make our home brighter and more cheerful, but birds are not always able to tell that there is a piece of glass between where they are and what they see on the other side. The glare from a clean glass window can impact their vision. If you place decals on the outside of your window it can break up the glare and help the birds know to change their flight path.



Supplies needed:

- Puff Paint (available at most craft stores)
- Clear plastic like a page protector or plastic food wrap
- Stencils or prints of shapes you want to make (*optional*)
- Paintbrush (*optional*)

Step 1. Place the stencil on top of the plastic or outline under the clear plastic.

Step 2. Use the puff paint to make the decal by following the stencil or tracing the outline. If you need to smooth out portions use a paint brush to make it even. Paint should be thick enough to handle being pulled off the plastic when dry and not tear.

Step 3. Allow decals to dry completely; this may take up to 24 hours. Place decals on the outside of your window. The closer together you can place them, the better; aim for about 4 inches apart.

mainly of seeds and fruits, they will also eat insects, especially in the summer. Cardinals can often be seen feeding on bird feeders. They have a distinctive crest on their head, a black mask, and the male cardinals' vibrant red color makes them easy to spot in the winter. As with many animals, the females have less vibrant color and are a duller reddish-brown. Both sexes have reddish beaks and brown eyes. They average 8-9 inches in length, and if you want them to visit your home, make sure you have sunflower seeds in your bird feeder.

Black-Capped Chickadee

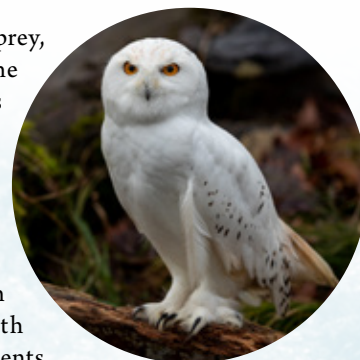


The Black-capped Chickadee is a small, active bird that can be commonly seen in woods and neighborhoods across North America. These birds are easily recognizable by their black cap and white cheeks, as well as their call, which is a cheerful “chick-a-dee” sound.

Chickadees are found in a variety of habitats, including hardwood and pine forests, woodlands, urban parks, and residential yards; they may even nest in man-made birdhouses. A chickadee's diet consists mostly of insects and other small invertebrates, but they will also eat seeds and berries. These birds often visit backyard bird feeders to supplement their diet in the winter time, and black oil sunflower seeds are one of their favorites. They average about 4.5 - 6 inches in length, but you won't see many unless you have a lot of trees and shrubs in your yard. They need protection from weather and predators.

Snowy Owl

The Snowy Owl is a large bird of prey, 20-28 inches in length and as the name implies their coloring is all white with only black spots and/or barring, their legs are feathered as well. They have been observed all over North America, from Alaska to Maine and from northern Canada to the southern United States. They live in both woods and prairie type environments, though they prefer open spaces with little vegetation because the hunting is easier. Snowy owls are primarily carnivorous, which means they eat meat. They hunt and eat mainly small mammals such as voles, shrews, and mice as well as rabbits, weasels, squirrels, fish, reptiles (such as snakes), and even small birds. You will often find Snowy Owls perched on trees or rocks during the day before going out at night to hunt. While they are not interested in the seeds that can be found in a bird feeder, they might just be hungry for the smaller birds and squirrels that visit backyard feeding stations. ■



Joann Burnside Hoyt lives in NW Indiana. Her real-world experiences as a Christian wife, mother, widow, 27-year home educator, grandmother, small business owner, and now wife once more, all combine to “work together for good” as she draws from her life to bring humor and hope to her audience.

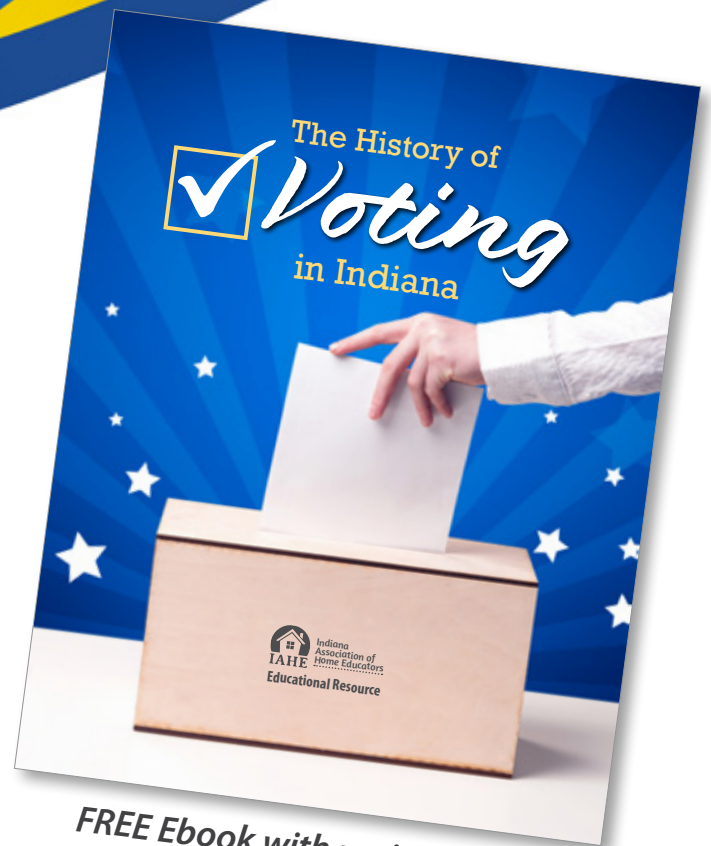
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